2026–2027 HEDS Sense of Community Survey Information Sheet

Updated: 8/17/2026

In this information sheet, we detail the survey options available to you, as well as our expectations, practices, fees, and terms of service.

- Survey Content and Design
- Survey Administration Window
- Report and Data Files
  - Custom Reports
- Consulting About Survey Results
- Survey Administration Methods
- Fees
- Other Survey Information
  - *Including information about survey contacts, IRB approval, unfinished surveys, supplemental questions, changes to survey questions, incentives, ADA accessibility, etc.*
- Respondent Anonymity
- Data Security
- Deadlines
- Registering for the Survey
- Contact Information

Survey Contents and Design

The HEDS Sense of Community Survey asks students, faculty, staff, and administrators about the extent to which they feel a sense of community at their institution. The survey asks people:

- If they feel welcome and supported at their institution
- How connected they feel to other people at their institution
- How their interactions with students, coworkers, colleagues, and supervisors impact their sense of community
- How their institution can better support people and increase their sense of community

You can use information from this survey to understand which experiences at your institution promote or diminish the sense of community and belonging felt by your students and employes. The survey takes about 10 minutes to complete and is anonymous to encourage people to openly share information about their experiences and perspectives.

We developed this survey using findings from focus groups on community with students, faculty, and staff that we've held at a range of institutions across the country over the past few years. We grounded the survey questions in the four dimensions of McMillan & Chavis's (1986) definition and theory of community 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs, and 4) emotional connection. You can view the survey instrument with our development notes here.

Our analysis of the survey data shows that a person's role (e.g., student, faculty, staff, administrator) is the *most important* factor shaping how they experience community at your institution. Thus, to truly understand the overall sense of community on your campus, it is important to survey your *entire* campus.

Discrimination and Harassment Module

This short optional module is designed to help you learn if people in your community are experiencing discrimination, harassment, and negative remarks. These questions come from our HEDS Campus Climate Survey. If your institution has administered this survey in the past, the module allows you to continue to track this information. There is a small fee, and if you use this module, you will be limited to five supplemental questions. View a copy of the Discrimination and Harassment questions.

Survey Administration Window

You can administer the HEDS Sense of Community Survey for any 3–6-week period between October 5, 2026, and May 28, 2027. Please note, you must **register at least seven weeks before the date on which you plan to begin administering the survey.**

Report and Data Files

You will receive:

- A live online summary report
    - During your survey administration, you will be able to monitor responses through a link to a live summary report displaying results for select survey questions.
    - The report updates continuously throughout the administration period, allowing you to:
        - gain an early, high-level sense of how people are responding to key parts of the survey;
        - monitor response rates and adjust communication or outreach strategies as needed; and
        - access an immediate summary of results as soon as the survey closes.
    - This report is printable and may be shared with anyone on your campus.
- Unit-record SPSS and Microsoft Excel files with your institution's survey data.
    - You will receive these within 10 business days after your survey closes.
- An internal comparison report comparing the responses of your students, faculty, and staff.
    - We will send this within 50 business days of your survey closing.
- A report that compares your institution's results to those of all other participating institutions on all survey questions and indicators.
    - We will begin working on these reports after the survey administration window closes at the end of May. We anticipate delivering this report mid-summer 2027.

Custom Reports

As time permits, we occasionally create custom reports for institutions. When we have the capacity to create a custom report, the fee will be based on the complexity of your request. If you are interested in a custom report, please let us know when we are working with you to set up the administration of your survey.

Consulting About Survey Results

As time permits, we are glad to schedule an hour-long conversation with you and your colleagues to answer questions and provide some guidance for interpreting your survey data. We charge a fee for more extensive support, such as writing a short memo summarizing your institution's survey data or making a presentation on your data to select groups at your institution. For example, we occasionally make virtual presentations on an institution's survey data or visit campuses to make presentations, conduct follow-up focus groups, or work with the institution to consider ways of acting on data from the survey. For the 2026-2027 academic year, our typical fee for up to three virtual presentations is $3,100 for HEDS institutions and $4,100 for institutions that don't belong to HEDS. For campus visits, we typically charge $3,400 plus expenses for HEDS institutions and $4,500 plus expenses for institutions that don't belong to HEDS. Please note, the fees we list above are examples, and

what we charge will vary depending on what you ask us to do. Furthermore, we are a small organization, so the number of consultations we can provide is limited.

Survey Administration Methods

We typically use one of three methods to invite people to take your survey. For full details about these methods, including the advantages and disadvantages of each, please see our Administration Methods for Anonymous Surveys document.

- **Email method** – We send each participant an email invitation with a unique link to the survey. You may send up to three email reminders to participants who do not complete the survey. Each message appears to come from your institution and is personalized with your institution name and contact information.
- **Authentication method** – You provide participants with a common link, and they use a unique password, such as their email address and/or ID number, to access the survey.
- **General link method** – You provide participants with a general link to the survey. No password is required to access and complete the survey. *Anyone* who follows the link can submit their responses.

If you want to use both email and authentication, please let us know so we can discuss the advantages and disadvantages of this approach. To ensure consistency in the administration process, comparative data, and people's anonymity, we do not allow institutions to administer any HEDS survey through their own survey engines.

Fees

	HEDS Institutions	**Institutions not in HEDS**
Base cost includes: • One 3- to 6-week survey administration • One administration method • An unlimited number of students and employees invited to take the survey • Up to 1,000 surveys • 10 supplemental questions (*any type*) • Report and data files as specified above	$675	$2,575
Discount for using the general link administration method only	- $50	- $150
Using both the authentication and email administration methods	+ $150	+ $200
Up to 10 additional supplemental questions *(for a total of 11–20 supplemental questions)*	+ $325	+ $375
Discrimination and Harassment Module *(If you use this module you may only add a total of 5 supplemental questions; there is no additional charge for them.)*	+ $325	+ $375
Surveys beyond the first 1,000. *(Count includes all administration methods and partial responses. Invoiced after survey window closes.)* If you are concerned about going over 1,000 surveys, please talk to us and we can discuss ways to manage your costs.	+ $0.65 per additional survey	+ $0.95 per additional survey
Late registration fee *(See explanation in registration section below)*	+ $275	+ $325
Late cancellation fee *(If you cancel after we have set up your survey in our survey engine, we will invoice you for a cancellation fee.)*	+ $300	+ $350

Special Fees

Multi-campus/Multi-institution administrations – If you want to administer a survey to people at multiple campuses or within a multi-institution system, please contact us for more information and pricing.

Reports for Partial Campus Populations – Our standard internal and external comparison reports break out your survey data by role because it is the most important factor shaping how a person experiences community at your institution. If you do not survey *all* roles on your campus–undergraduate students, advanced-degree students (if you have them), faculty, staff, and administrators–we will need to create a special report. An additional fee of $200 for members or $250 for non-members will apply. (Please note, the additional fee will apply if advanced degree students are the only students in your reports.)

Contracts or survey agreements from your institution – If your institution requires us to use an agreement or contract developed by your institution and we determine that we need our attorney to review that agreement, we will add the cost of that review to your survey fee. The standard rate for a contract review by our counsel is $500.

Errors in participant list – If you realize that you made an error in the participant list you provided us (e.g., incomplete list, incorrect group of people, emails with incorrect names) after the survey has launched, please notify us immediately. Depending on the scope of the error, we may need to close the survey, clear any responses, and relaunch the survey for an additional fee.

Invoicing

We will send your invoice about the time your survey opens. This invoice will include the base cost of the survey, any additional options you chose, and (if you registered less than seven weeks prior to your survey start date) the late registration fee. You can pay by credit card (3.5% fee applies), direct deposit, or check.

HEDS member prices – In order to qualify for the HEDS member discounted survey fees listed above, your institution must have paid its HEDS membership fee for 2026-2027 by the time we invoice you, or we will charge you the full survey price. Please talk to us if you are uncertain if your institution is up to date on its membership fee.

Surveys above 1,000 – If your total responses, including partial responses, go over 1,000, we will invoice you separately for this after your survey closes and we have a final count. You can cap the total number of *completed* responses your survey accepts. So, if you are concerned about these costs, please talk to us.

Non-payment – Please be aware, we will not send your reports until your invoice has been paid.

Other Survey Information

Survey liaison – You will need to identify one individual from your institution to serve as the survey liaison. We'll direct all communication to the survey liaison, and the survey liaison is responsible for contacting other people on their campus about survey logistics. The survey liaison will be responsible for providing the survey materials needed based on the administration method chosen (see above), testing the survey, and collaborating with us to troubleshoot if technical problems arise.

HEDS Primary Contacts – If you belong to a HEDS member institution you have a HEDS Primary Contact who, according to Section 1.03 of HEDS Bylaws, is responsible for approving institutional participation in HEDS surveys. The survey liaison does not need to be the primary contact, but we will need your primary contact to give their consent for your institution to administer the survey. We will include them in the invitation to your set-up call, and they will also receive a copy of all data files and reports from the survey.

IRB approval – The HEDS Sense of Community Survey has been approved by the Wabash College Institutional Review Board (IRB) for use as a voluntary survey. We encourage your institution's survey liaison to contact the IRB at your institution to determine whether their approval is needed, including approval of supplemental questions if applicable, before administering this survey. The Wabash IRB will not enter into authorization agreements with institutions that use HEDS surveys.

Incentives – You can offer incentives. We will provide instructions for how to do so on an anonymous survey.

Unfinished surveys – Participants may choose not to answer any question in the survey. They may also stop taking the survey at any time and choose not to submit their data. However, you will receive these partial responses in your unit-record data files.

Supplemental questions – You can add supplemental questions related to the survey's subject matter at the end of the survey. The questions must not ask for information that would lead to the identification of people taking the survey. Each sub-question on a multipart or matrix question counts as one supplemental question. For more information on how to count and format supplemental questions before submitting them to HEDS, please review our Supplemental Question Guide. Your data file will include participants' responses to these questions, but the HEDS reports will not.

Changes to the survey questions – While you can *add* supplemental questions to the end, we do not modify our survey questions or response options. In order for us to offer the benefit of comparative data between participating institutions in our survey reports, the questions and response options have to be the same across all the colleges and universities using the survey. For institutions that do not have graduate students, we will hide that response option in question one, which asks them for their primary role.

Embedding institution names – We will set up the survey so that your institution's name appears prominently on each page and in questions.

Additional language versions – Qualtrics, our survey engine, can translate your survey into other languages using Google Translate. If you are interested in this option, please let us know. Depending on our survey load, we may have to limit you to using one additional language or charge extra for using more than one additional language.

ADA Accessibility – Please let us know if anyone at your institution needs a version of the survey that is compatible with screen readers or has other ADA-related requirements so we can discuss options with you.

Respondent Anonymity

We exclude personal information, including name, email address, student or employee identification number, and IP address, from the data you receive. We do not review responses to open-ended questions. You will receive those exactly as written. It is possible people will identify themselves or others in their comments. We explain this in the introduction of your survey and warn your participants that if they do not want people at your institution to know who they are, they should not write anything that might identify them.

Data Security

HEDS secures your survey data and participant information by:

- Using a secure survey engine. Our survey engine, Qualtrics, stores your participant information and responses securely. Qualtrics protects its servers with firewalls, security scans, and nightly data backups. Qualtrics' security statement is available at http://www.qualtrics.com/security-statement/.
- Using Box, a password-protected, encrypted, secure file storage system. We use Box to receive, store, and send files with personally identifiable data. See more information about Box's privacy and security at https://www.box.com/security-compliance.

- We use TunnelBear as a virtual private network (VPN) to secure our online tasks when we work remotely. Learn more about how TunnelBear secures internet browsing here: https://www.tunnelbear.com/blog/stronger-encryption/.
- We will not share any personally identifiable information with any outside individuals or entities.

Deadlines

Below we review your deadlines for each step in our work together to set up a survey. Setting up surveys exactly how you'd like them is complicated, and we may be setting up and running many dozens of surveys at a time. We've set the following deadlines to ensure we have enough time to do a good job administering your survey. If you miss a deadline, we will probably have to delay the opening of your survey. The deadlines below are based on the date you wish to start your survey administration.

Task for your institution	Deadline
Register for the Survey	At least **seven weeks (35 business days)** before the survey start date. *Earlier is better to allow you more time to work out the details of your survey.*
Set up Call with HEDS to Discuss Survey Details HEDS will contact you to set up a call to discuss the details of your survey administration, fees, and to let you know what materials you will need to provide.	Call takes place **2–9 business days** after registering. *We will offer you meeting times and dates within this 2–9 day window. If our call occurs during this period, you will have at least ten (10) business days to gather your materials.*
Provide All Final Survey Materials to HEDS Final means *all stakeholders* have viewed and approved any of the following submitted to HEDS: how your institution's name will appear in the survey, information about the survey leader(s) at your institution, administration method(s), your participant list, dates to send and information to personalize the invitations and reminder messages, incentive options, and supplemental questions. ***Once we set up your survey in our survey engine for testing, any changes you make to the content of these materials will result in a significant delay in launching your survey*** .	By end-of-day, **sixteen (16) business days** before the survey start date. *This is a very important deadline for meeting your desired survey start date. The earlier you register and meet with your HEDS survey team member, the more time you will have to gather your materials and get them approved.*

Provide HEDS with Feedback on Survey Test	By end-of-day, **eight (8) business days** before the survey start date. *You will have a minimum of 3 business days to test your survey.*
Provide HEDS with Feedback on Final Survey Test (*only if necessary)* A second test will *only* happen if there was a technical difficulty to resolve, or if we made an error when setting up your survey.	By end-of-day, **four (4) business days** before the survey start date. *You will have a minimum of 2 business days for a second test.*

Important Note About Survey Testing

The purpose of testing is to ensure that the survey will run smoothly and to fix any technical difficulties (i.e., invitation messages going to spam) before your survey launches. Testing also allows you to check that we entered the custom section in your invitation message (if using the email method) and supplemental questions exactly as you submitted them to us. We need to work with the final, approved version of all survey materials when setting up your survey for testing. **Testing isn't the time to edit the content of emails or supplemental survey questions. Once we've used the information you've sent us to set up your survey for testing, any changes you make in that information will result in a significant delay, potentially days, in when we can launch your survey.** It is important that you ask anyone at your institution who needs to review and approve your survey materials to do so before sending that material to us.

Registering for the HEDS Sense of Community Survey

You can register for the 2026–2027 HEDS Sense of Community Survey using our online registration form. **You must register at least seven weeks from the date you wish your survey to begin**. Late registrations are accepted only in rare circumstances, and there will be a late fee (see the Fee table). The last day to register will be March 19, 2027. Once you submit the registration form, we will contact you to discuss your survey preferences and the associated fees. Following this conversation, we will send you the materials we need filled out to set up your survey as we discussed.

Questions about the HEDS Sense of Community Survey?

Don't hesitate to get in touch with us at communitysurvey@hedsconsortium.org if you have any questions.